



The San Diego Union-Tribune
July 5, 2006

"...the Senate bill lacks strong employer enforcement, prioritizes low-skill immigration over skill-based immigration, and increases future immigration levels from 18.9 million to 66 million over the next 20 years. Reid-Kennedy would even allow illegal immigrants to collect from an already-dwindling Social Security system."

- Chairman Edward Royce (R-CA)

[Let's begin by giving voice to the people](#)

By Edward Royce
July 5, 2006

Today, San Diego is hosting the first in a series of nationwide field hearings to provide members of Congress with an opportunity to hear from the people who are directly affected by the problem of illegal immigration. Reform does not start in Washington, D.C. It starts by giving voice to the people.

A battle has broken out on Capitol Hill over the past few weeks, ignited by citizens legitimately concerned with the impact of illegal immigration and by testimony that al-Qaeda leaders believe their operatives can pay their way illegally through Mexico into the United States. The message is clear: It is time to secure our border and find a solution to the growing problem of illegal immigration. I believe it is time to hear from the people on this critical issue.

Back in December, the House passed strong border security legislation. The House bill would close down our porous borders by putting more boots on the ground, and building bigger and stronger barriers along the border, as well as ending the risky "catch-and-release" policy that sets illegal immigrants free after being arrested. These are common-sense measures that are necessary to upholding the rule of law in our country and also to protecting our citizens from potential criminal and terrorist acts.

Unfortunately, the immigration debate in the Senate has been hijacked by Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid and Sen. Ted Kennedy. The deeply flawed Reid-Kennedy immigration bill was passed hastily with a series of provisions that undermine the House's effort to secure our borders.

First and foremost, the Senate legislation is 800 pages long, and all its provisions are still being analyzed. What we do know is that the Senate bill lacks strong employer enforcement, prioritizes low-skill immigration over skill-based immigration, and increases future immigration levels from 18.9 million to 66 million over the next 20 years. Reid-Kennedy would even allow illegal immigrants to collect from an already-dwindling Social Security system. If that weren't enough, the Senate legislation contains a provision stating that the American government must consult with the Mexican government before constructing a barrier along the southern border.

The Reid-Kennedy bill is out of step with mainstream America, and it does not address the serious needs and concerns that Americans have about illegal immigration and the lack of border security. Our hearings will examine our border vulnerabilities, including the possibility of a potential terrorist attack. As Border Patrol officials state, "an ever-present threat exists from the potential for terrorists to employ the same smuggling and transportation networks, infrastructure and drop houses" utilized by human and drug smuggling networks on the border. Late last year, government investigators, one of whom will testify at our hearing, successfully smuggled radiological material suited for a dirty bomb across our border.

I am looking forward to hearing the thoughts and suggestions from the law enforcement and border security experts who will be testifying today. After all, it is they who are out on the front lines working to keep us safe. It is time for the "people's house" to start hearing from the people who need us most.

Royce, a Republican from Fullerton, is a member of the House International Relations Committee. He is the chairman of the Subcommittee on Terrorism and Nuclear Proliferation. He will chair today's congressional hearings in San Diego on immigration.